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Poll Release #2020-09: California Voters Strongly Divided About President Trump's Attribution of COVID-19 to China

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Authors

Mora, G. Cristina
Schickler, Eric
Haro, Alein

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Institute of Governmental Studies
126 Moses Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Tel: 510-642-4465
Email: igs@berkeley.edu

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***California Voters Strongly Divided About President Trump's Attribution of
COVID-19 to China***

As the coronavirus has spread across the U.S., a surge in anti-Asian rhetoric and hate crimes has occurred. Asians have historically been blamed for being disease carriers. According to the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center¹, this has led to over 1,500 reported coronavirus-related racist incidents against Asians in one month since the group began tracking cases in March. Between April 16 and 20, 2020, the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) and the California Initiative for Health Equity & Action (Cal-IHEA), polled 8,800 registered voters about the racialized language President Trump uses when referring to COVID-19. Overall, Californians who approve of the President are not only more likely to blame the Chinese government for the pandemic and shortage of medical supplies but they are also more likely to agree with calling the coronavirus the 'China virus'.

When asked whether it is acceptable for President Trump to refer to COVID-19 as the 'China virus,' the 'Chinese virus,' or the 'Wuhan virus,' only 29% of California voters endorse the use of these terms. Of voters who disapprove or strongly disapprove of the President, only 8% believe that his use of these terms is acceptable, compared to 76% of voters who approve or strongly approve of the President.

¹ http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Press_Release_4_23_20.pdf

Table 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “It is acceptable for President Trump to refer to COVID-19 as the ‘China virus,’ the ‘Chinese virus,’ or the ‘Wuhan virus.’”

	All Voters	Approve/ Disapprove of “the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President”		
		Strongly Approve or Approve	Neutral	Strongly Disapprove or Disapprove
		%	%	%
Strongly Agree	21.1	60.7	12.6	3.5
Agree	8	15.4	11	4.2
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10.8	13.4	28.7	7.8
Disagree	7.8	3.7	11.1	9.4
Strongly Disagree	52.2	6.6	36.5	75.1
No Opinion	0.1	0.2	0.1	0

Californians are more likely to attribute responsibility for the COVID-19 pandemic to the Chinese government. Half of all individuals find that the Chinese government is either completely or mostly responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic and shortage of tests and medical supplies. Among Californians who approve of Trump’s job as president, 78% find the Chinese government completely or mostly responsible for the pandemic, compared to 37% of Californians who disapprove of the President. Alein Haro, Cal-IHEA Research Fellow, predicts that “we will continue to hear messages of blaming the Chinese government and individuals through November. This racialized messaging is a political strategy to foster racial fears with the sole purpose of clearing President Trump from his slow response to and dismissive attitude toward the virus.”

Table 2. To what extent do you think the **Chinese government/administration** is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic and shortage of tests and medical supplies?

	All Voters %	Approve/ Disapprove of “the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President”		
		Strongly Approve or Approve	Neutral	Strongly Disapprove or Disapprove
		%	%	%
Completely responsible	29.7	57.1	25.4	17.3
Mostly responsible	19.9	20.8	16.6	19.7
Somewhat responsible	29.1	11.9	38.6	36.3
Not responsible	20.5	9.1	18.2	26.1
No Opinion	0.8	1.1	1.1	0.6

Only a small segment (11%) of California voters think Chinese individuals are completely or mostly responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic and shortage of tests and medical supplies. However, 1 in every 5 Californians who approve or strongly approve of the way Trump is handling his job as President believe that Chinese individuals are completely or mostly responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic and the shortage of tests and medical supplies compared to 6% who disapprove or strongly disapprove of the President.

Table 3. To what extent do you think **Chinese individuals** are responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic and shortage of tests and medical supplies.

	All Voters	Approve/ Disapprove of “the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President”		
		Strongly Approve or Approve	Neutral	Strongly Disapprove or Disapprove
	%	%	%	%
Completely responsible	5.7	11.4	8.7	2.7
Mostly responsible	5.3	8.2	7.1	3.8
Somewhat responsible	15.6	18	21.8	13.9
Not responsible	72.5	61	61.3	79.1
No Opinion	0.8	1.4	1	0.5

About the Survey

The findings in this report are based on a Berkeley IGS Poll completed by the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) at the University of California, Berkeley in conjunction with the California Initiative for Health Equity & Action (Cal-IHEA). The poll was administered online in English and Spanish between April 16 and 20 among 8,800 registered voters statewide.

The survey was administered by distributing email invitations to stratified random samples of the state’s registered voters. Once the questionnaire and email invitations had been finalized, they were translated into the Spanish and reviewed for cultural appropriateness. Each email included an invitation for invited voters to participate in a nonpartisan survey and provided a link to the IGS website where the survey was housed. Reminder emails were distributed to non responding voters and an opt out link was provided for voters not wishing to participate and not wanting to receive future emails from IGS about the survey.

Samples of registered voters with email addresses were provided to IGS by Political Data, Inc., a leading supplier of registered voter lists in California. The email addresses of voters were derived from information contained on the state’s official voter registration rolls. The overall sample of registered voters with email addresses was stratified in an attempt to obtain a proper balance of survey respondents across major segments of the registered voter population.

To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, voters’ email addresses and all other personally identifiable information were purged from the data file and replaced

with a unique and anonymous identification number during data processing. At the conclusion of the data processing phase, post stratification weights were applied to align the sample to population characteristics of the state's overall registered voter population. The sampling error associated with the results from the survey are difficult to calculate precisely due to the effects of sample stratification and the post- stratification weighting. Nevertheless, it is likely that the results are subject to a sampling error of approximately +/-3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results based on subgroups of this population would be subject to larger margins of sampling error.